At present, Railway Electrification projects are taken up based on financial appraisal of, and Railways operational requirements for, such projects.

(c) The term of the Committee expires on 20.09.2001. Its Report is likely to be submitted thereafter.

Unmanned railway level crossings in Himachal Pradesh

2862. SHRI ANIL SHARMA: Will the Minister of RAILWAYS be pleased to state:

(a) the details of unmanned level crossings in Himachal Pradesh; and

(b) what steps have been taken to prevent accidental deaths on these crossings?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF RAILWAYS (SHRI O. RAJAGOPAL): (a) There are 289 unmanned level crossings in Himachal Pradesh. Gauge-wise details are as under:—

On broad gauge = 6

On narrow gauge = 283

(b) Accidents at unmanned level crossings mainly occur due to negligence of the road users who fail to observe the rules and stipulations contained in the Motor Vehicle Act, 1988.

The important steps taken by the Government to prevent accidental deaths at Unmanned level crossings are listed below:—

1. On the road approaches, "Stop Boards" are provided on either side of the level crossings at suitable points within the railway boundary to warn the road users.
2. Speed breakers/rumble strips have been provided on road approaches to level crossing so that road vehicle drivers reduce their speed.
3. Whistle Board are provided on rail approach to level crossings for train drivers to whistle from the whistle board till such time as the train passes the level crossing gate.
4. Education of road drivers about safety at unmanned level crossings by publicity campaings through media like quickies on TV, cinema slides, posters, talks on radio, newspaper advertisements and street plays.

5. Chief Secretaries of States have been requested to help in educating road users about safety precautions at level crossings and for exercising strict checks while issuing driving licences.

6. Joint Ambush Checks with civil authorities are conducted to nab errant road vehicle drivers under the provisions of the Motor Vehicles Act, 1988 and the Railways Act, 1989.

7. Involvement of village Panchayats in the railways public awareness programmes.

8. Putting up level crossing safety posters at village Panchayat Offices and at retail petrol pumps.

9. The unmanned level crossings are progressively being manned in a phased manner. Although the intial cost of manning of unmanned Level Corssing, has to be borne by the Road authority concerned and annual operating & maintenance cost is to be borne by the Railway. Considering the serious consequences of the accidents at unmanned Level Crossings, Railway has sanctioned manning of 4 unmanned level corssings identified as hazardous, at its own cost. No proposals for Manning of other unmanned level corssings have been received from the State Govt./Road authority concerned who have to bear initial capital cost of the same.

Railways have also decided to man equal number of Level Crossing at its own cost as are manned through funds from MPLADS as per the recommendaitons of Hon'ble MPs.

Time limit for settlement of railway compensation cases

2863. DR. Y. LAKSHMI PRASAD: Will the Minister of RAILWAYS be pleased to state:

(a) the time usually taken for payment of compensation to victims of rail accident; and

(b) the action taken to settle the cases at the earliest preferably within a fortnight?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF RAILWAYS (SHRI O. RAJAGOPAL): (a) Payment of compensation is arranged through cheque normally within 15 days of the award made by Railway Claims Tribunal on the claim application filed by victims or relations of accident victims.